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HELD IN NEW YORK CITY
31 July 1969
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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN NEW YORK CITY

I. CONVENE, 400 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y.

A special meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts was held in the offices of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 400 Park Avenue, New York City on 31 July 1969. The members met, pursuant to notice, in executive session at 10:55 a.m. with William Walton, Chairman, presiding.

Present were: William Walton
Gordon Bunshaft
Kevin Roche

Staff: Charles H. Atherton, Secretary
Daniel Reiff, Staff Assistant

II. ADMINISTRATION

Date of Next Meeting

September 17 was reconfirmed as date of the next meeting in Washington.

III. SUBMISSIONS-REVIEWS

1. D.C. Government, Department of Buildings and Grounds

a. Elementary School, Alabama Avenue & Congress St., S.E. - Proposed Design

The general site plan and massing of this school appeared to be satisfactory, but several of the architectural details, especially the projecting bays and the transition to a screen on the first floor, offered no real solution. Further discussion was withheld until a conference with the architect.

b. Bruce-Monroe Elementary School Replacement, Georgia Avenue and Irving St., N.W. - Revised Design

Sketches of three elevation studies labelled H, J and G, were inspected by the members. Scheme J was chosen as the one most suitable of further development since it appeared to meet most of the Commission's earlier recommendations. They found the fenestration unsatisfactory and agreed to ask the architect to study the substitution of large square windows on the second and third floors instead of the three narrow windows shown in the design. Further discussion was withheld until a conference with the architect.

c. Orr Elementary School Replacement, Minnesota Avenue and 22nd St.,S.E. - Proposed Design

This design immediately produced a favorable reaction. The plan was obviously well-ordered, related nicely to the triangular geometry of the site, and resulted in a simple but strong massing for the composition. The scheme would also lend itself well to expansion by adding an identical classroom wing to the centrally located all-purpose rooms and administrative facilities for the school.

The Secretary pointed out that this was the architect's preference as a means of providing additional classrooms but that the Department of Buildings and Grounds had asked him to study the possibility of adding additional floors. The members agreed that this would be far less desirable, resulting in a building that was not only functionally poor but also unattractive.

The members were also advised that the architect had been requested to restrict the level of the stair towers to the cornice line of the classroom unit and not project them above this line some fifteen feet, as preferred by the architect. Again the Commission agreed that this would substantially diminish the strength of the design and would urge in its report to the District Government that the architect's scheme prevail.

Further discussion was withheld until a conference with the architect.

2. D.C. Government, Department of Economic Development

S.L. 70-1, 1740 New York Avenue, N.W., United Unions Office Building - Volume Studies

The submission consisted of a model of the site and the surrounding area including the Corcoran Gallery to the east, buildings on New York Avenue to the north, the General Services Administration Building, Rawlins Park, Interior Department and the Red Cross Headquarters, as requested by the Commission at its meeting in June. Four studies were presented, identified as A through D. Of the four, two were thought suitable for further development.

Scheme B consisted of a symmetrical mass with the principal elevation on New York Avenue divided into three bays, the two side bays chamfered back to respect the diagonal of New York Avenue. This was also repeated on the E Street elevation.

Scheme D was a more conventional solution, with a symmetrical, rectangular mass lined up with the grid system of streets thereby creating a triangular plaza on the north — adjoining New York Avenue.

Both these schemes had west elevations which were on axis with Rawlins Park.

Scheme D could obviously be more easily developed in a number of ways, while Scheme B would be more restricted because of the problems in treating the intersections of the angled facades.

Further discussion was withheld until a conference with the architect.

3. General Services Administration, Region Three

John E. Fogarty International Center of Advanced Study in the Health Sciences, National Institutes of Health - Revised Design

Discussion was withheld until presentation of revised designs by the architect. No material available for discussion.

4. Trustees of the National Gallery of Art

Extension of Gallery on Fourth Street, Pennsylvania Avenue and Madison Drive.

Discussion was withheld until presentation of preliminary designs by the architect. No material available for discussion.

III. INTERVIEWS

1. D.C. Government, Department of Buildings and Grounds

a. Elementary School, Alabama Avenue and Congress St., S.E. - Proposed Design. Leroy Brown, Architect.

Mr. Bunshaft briefly sketched the Commission's objection to the handling of the projecting bays on the two main elevations stating that the present scheme was not acceptable. In subsequent discussion the members also learned that what appeared to be bays on the first floor actually did not exist, but that the scheme merely appeared to be bays. This narrowed the number of possibilities in the members' opinion and they suggested that the only solution would be to carry the fenestration and bay treatment on the second and third floors to the first floor. They also felt that the design would be enhanced by the elimination of the projecting cornice, simplifying it as much as possible. A neutral color brick, a gray or amber tinted glass and dark metal window frames were recommended as materials.

Mr. Brown agreed to restudy the suggestions of the Commission and to submit drawings for the next meeting. The Commission's action was reported to the Department of Buildings and Grounds. EXHIBIT A

b. Bruce-Monroe Elementary School Replacement, Georgia Avenue and Irving St., N.W. - Revised Design. Albert Edgecome representing Mr. Ronald Senseman.

Mr. Edgecome was advised of the members' preference for Scheme J provided that additional study could be given to the fenestration of the second and third floors. In the discussion with the architect it was re-emphasized that the Commission thought that the over-all plan and massing of the building were good. In discussing proposed materials, the members recommended that this school also be treated with a neutral brick, tinted glass and dark metal window frames and that this material also be used in the elements that joined the projecting stair wells with the octagonal classroom wings.

Mr. Edgecome agreed to make the studies requested by the Commission in time for review at the September meeting.

c. Orr Elementary School Replacement, Minnesota Avenue and 22nd St., S.E. - Proposed Design. Mr. Donald Roberts, architect and designer of the school and Mr. John Dawson, architect.

Mr. Roberts was complimented on the imaginative use of the site and the highly professional quality of the entire design. They assured Mr. Roberts that in the Commission's letter to the D.C. Government a strong recommendation would be made urging that his proposal of a new wing for expansion purposes be followed and that the stair towers extend above the cornice line of the classroom wing as shown in the drawings. As to the materials of the building, the members hoped that they would be a light neutral shade of brick.

2. District of Columbia Government, Department of Economic Development

S.L. 70-1, 1740 New York Avenue, N.W., United Unions Office Building - Revised. Design. Mr. James H. Cosgrove, architect.

The members briefly reviewed their reaction to the four schemes presented by the architect, stating that schemes B and D offered the most opportunity for appropriate development. As far as the volumes of the two schemes were concerned, Scheme B would be a more interesting solution but at the same time would pose problems in treating the facades. It was stressed that a curtain wall treatment would not be possible and that the building would have to be designed with a fairly strong sculptural quality such as one would get with a poured-in-place concrete structure.

Scheme D, the rectangular solution, would be easier to treat, lending itself to a variety of solutions but at the same time, of course, it would fail to reflect the rather special geometry of the site in relation to New York Avenue.

The architect agreed to study both schemes and to present them at some future time for the Commission's consideration.

3. *General Services Administration, Region Three*

John E. Fogarty International Center of Advanced Study in the Health Sciences, National Institute of Health - Revised Design. Mr. Gyo Obata, architect.

Mr. Obata showed the members of the Commission an entirely new scheme consisting of a very tightly knit cluster of buildings centered around the principal memorial hall. The administrative facilities, conference rooms and living quarters were all interconnected in this plan. The general character of the composition would be developed directly out of this plan and would consist of a series of rectangular and cubicle volumes.

The entire concept was in sharp contrast to the original design which was loosely organized with a variety of shapes and sizes resembling a small village development, rather than a compact cluster.

The reaction of the members was immediately favorable and in turn Mr. Obata said that he himself was much happier with this new scheme. In discussing various aspects of the design, the members made the point that such a concept could only be executed in concrete -- that brick would work under no circumstances. Mr. Obata agreed. He then showed an alternate site plan that had been requested by Mr. Yasko of General Services Administration which showed the living quarters separated by some distance from the rest of the complex. The members agreed with the architect that this would be far less satisfactory as it would substantially diminish the strength of the concept engendered in the compact cluster. The architect was assured that the Commission's letter to GSA would note approval was clearly based on retaining the living quarters as part of the central complex.

4. *Trustees of the National Gallery of Art*

Addition to National Gallery of Art - Proposed Design. Mr. Ieoh Ming Pei, architect.

Mr. Pei presented a series of small scale plans and a section which he used to illustrate how the program and the design are being developed concurrently. It was immediately apparent that both were very complex. Starting with the trapezoidal shape of the site, the uncertainty over the closing or tunneling of Fourth Street and the extensive underground links between the new and existing structures, Mr. Pei gradually sketched the development of the design to this stage.

The general allocation of space, he stated, would include roughly 150,000 square feet for exhibit space which would be divided into three equal galleries or "houses" that could function as separate entities; 150,000 square feet for the "institute" which will provide space for scholarly research, and 150,000 square feet for the cafeteria services, administrative facilities, parking, etc. He also briefly

sketched the concept for the interior spaces, the parts of which would be joined by an extensive circulation space illuminated from overhead sky lights. Except for the exposed ceilings and sky light, the materials would be marble throughout, in fact the same marble that was used in the present National Gallery. Exposed ceilings would be natural concrete. The architect also indicated that on the exterior there was a possibility that certain portions of the spandrels could also be exposed concrete. Mr. Bunshaft took particular exception to this possibility, stating that the entire exterior structure should be marble if at all possible. There was also some discussion of the height of the building in relation to cornice lines that prevail along Constitution Avenue. Mr. Pei is studying additional height for the new structure which he feels might strengthen the overall view along Constitution Avenue, especially where it meets Pennsylvania Avenue. The members tended to agree and asked that this be carefully studied in large scale profile drawings.

The reaction to the presentation was entirely favorable, the members stating that it appeared to be an exciting concept and one offering considerable promise. Mr. Pei indicated that the next hurdle was to present the same material to the Trustees of the Gallery at their meeting on September 16 and to explore the matter of cost which appears to have grown considerably beyond the original estimate. Once the scope of the work has been set, he will then proceed to develop the preliminary concept into detailed designs which he promised to bring to the Commission at the earliest possible time.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Submitted,

Charles H. Atherton

Charles H. Atherton
Secretary

20 August 1969

Dear Colonel Starobin:

At the request of the Department of General Services, the Commission of Fine Arts held a special meeting in New York City on July 31st in order to consider designs for three new elementary schools. Here is a brief summary of the actions:

. The Orr Elementary School designed by Mr. Donald Roberts was approved. The Commission thought that these designs were by far the best that had been presented in some time. It is an excellent solution, and shows both ingenuity and imagination on the part of the architect. There are two features of the design that we understand have been questioned by the D.C. Government. One, the potential addition of future classroom space and two, the height of the stair towers in relation to the roof of the structure.

We agree with Mr. Roberts that to add additional stories to the present scheme would not be wise planning. To do so would result in a structure that was not only functionally poor but far less desirable esthetically. Any additional classroom space should be added in a new wing on the other side of the all purpose space. We also agree with the architect that the stair tower should project approximately 10-15 feet above the present cornice line. This feature gives needed strength to the design.

The materials, in the Commission's opinion, should consist of a light neutral color brick with dark metal window frames and tinted glass.

. The designs for the school on Alabama Avenue and Congress Street, prepared by Mr. Leroy Brown, were less satisfactory. The treatment of the principle elevations on the first floor was simply not a solution to the problem. The only way to handle this situation, in the Commission's view, is to carry the same bay and window openings occuring on the second and third floors to the ground floor. Also included would be elimination of the horizontal band at the second floor level. This is the most simple and practical answer and the Commission would like to see the architect develop studies along these lines.

. Finally the Commission looked at three additional schemes for the Bruce-Monroe Elementary School designed by Ronald Senseman. One of the schemes, labeled Sketch J, was acceptable. We urged that in developing

final drawings, the architect study the possibility of widening the windows or perhaps combining the two into one large square window, where shown on plan.

Concerning materials, the Commission urges the use of not only dark metal window frames and tinted glass but also a fairly dark brick either in the red or brown range.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for September 17th and we will be glad to consider any new studies at that time.

Sincerely yours,

Charles H. Atherton
Secretary

Lt. Colonel Sam D. Starobin
Acting Director
Department of General Services
Room 400
601 Indiana Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Pavel

Dear Mr. ~~Kunzig:~~

At the request of officials from the Public Buildings Service, the Commission held a special meeting in New York City on July 31st in order to meet with Mr. Gyo Obata to discuss revised plans for the Fogarty International Center at NIH Headquarters in Bethesda.

I am happy to report that the members were very pleased with the new designs. Mr. Obata's approach is now much stronger than the original and will result in a handsome complex of buildings.

There is one feature of the program that apparently has not been completely resolved and that is the location of the living units in relation to bhe conference rooms and administrative space. We would hope that they could be combined in a single cluster as suggested by the architect, but I understand that this raises some question in the minds of NIH planners since these units will not only be used by people attending the conference center but also those who will be doing research in ohher buildings. I think this is primarily an administrative problem and not one of architectural organization. However, it may bear further consideration by the Commission and we would be Glad ~~happy~~ to discuss the matter with the architect and members of the NIH staff at our next meeting on September 17th here in Washington.

WW, Chmn

OK. WW

~~Mr. Robert L. Kunzig~~
Administrator
General Services Administration
Washington, D.C.

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
31 JULY 1969

AM
10:30

I. *CONVENE, 400 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY*

II. *ADMINISTRATION*

1. *Date of Next Meeting: 17 September 1969, 10:00 a.m.*

III. *SUBMISSIONS-REVIEWS-INTERVIEWS*

1. *General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service*

   Addition to National Gallery of Art - Proposed Design

2. *General Services Administration, Region Three*

   John E. Fogarty International Center of Advanced Study in the Health Sciences, National Institute of Health - Revised Design

3. *District of Columbia Government, Department of Buildings and Grounds*

   a. *Bruce-Monroe Elementary School Replacement, Georgia Avenue and Irving St., N.W. - Revised Design*

   b. *Elementary School, Alabama Avenue & Congress Streets, S.E. - Proposed Design*

   c. *Orr Elementary School Replacement, Minnesota Avenue and 22nd St., S.E. - Proposed Design*

IV. 4. *District of Columbia Government, Department of Economic Development*

S.L. 70-1, 1740 New York Avenue, N.W. United Unions Office Building - Revised Design

13 September 1969

Dear Mr. Pavel:

Before sending our report on the Commission's meeting, July 31, at which we discussed the Fogarty Center at NIH, I received your letter to go ahead and schedule it at another meeting on September 17th, so I am merely sending the enclosed report as a matter of record.

As you know, the project was withdrawn by your office from our September 17th meeting and is now scheduled for our next meeting which is planned for the 22nd of October.

Sincerely yours,

Charles H. Atherton
Secretary

Mr. Harold J. Pavel
Acting Regional Director
Public Buildings Service
General Services Administration
Washington, D.C.